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Appln. No. : 09/967,315
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Amendments to the Specification:

Please replace the paragraph beginning on page 11, line 27, and ending on page 12, line 18, of the specification with the following amended paragraph:

In Fig. 5, a ferrule 16 is shown which has an input cone 17 with an axial length in the preferred embodiment in excess of 2 mm and preferably 2.4 mm or approximately twice the length of prior art input cones. The input diameter "D2" of input cone 17 is approximately .8 mm to accommodate the 500 [[mm]] μm combined diameter of input fibers 18 and allow room for epoxy to bond the fibers within cone 17. The exit diameter "D3" of cone 17 adjacent capillaries 19 and 21, which receive and secure the optical fibers 18 therein, is preferably determined as:

$$D3 = 2f_s + D1$$

$$\text{or } D3 = 250 \mu\text{m} + D1$$

where f_s is the fiber diameter with the sheath material removed

This accommodates any spacing $D1$ between the fibers and the 125 μm diameters of each of the stripped input and reflective fibers, allowing also approximately a 1.0 μm gap at the input to capillary tubes 19 and 21 for epoxy to securely seat the input fibers 18 within ferrule 16. To obtain the best possible performance, the fibers should be selected for their geometric properties. Three important properties and the preferred tolerances are outer cladding diameter of 125 μm +/- 0.2 μm , non-circularity of the cladding less than 0.2%, and core to cladding concentricity is less than 0.2 μm . By expanding the axial length "L" of cone 17 to nearly twice that of prior art input ferrules, S-bending is substantially avoided, providing substantially a nearly equal optical path length for both the input fibers and reducing insertion losses. This technique is also applicable to ferrules having more than two optical fibers and to ferrules with single or multiple capillaries.